Mother Mourns Three-Year-Old Daughter's Tragic Fire Death

By News Staff
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An unthinkable tragedy has befallen a Peterborough family less than two weeks before Christmas.

Fire broke out early Sunday at a townhouse complex, claiming the life of three-year-old Ava Thomas (pictured) and sending an 18-month-old boy to Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

Ava's mother spoke to **CityNews** on Monday.

"She was the best part of my day," said a devastated Christine Thomas. "I miss her so much, I can't take it anymore."

Thomas was working the night shift at a local Wendy's when the fire broke out Saturday night. A 16-year-old friend was watching her youngest daughter, Ava, as well as her other children along with her friend's 18-month-old son, Tanner.

The older children were able to escape the home, but Ava and Tanner were trapped inside.

He was rushed to hospital and is expected to be okay. But it was too late for little Ava.

“We had the best relationship,” her mom adds through tears. “She’s very smart, very smart. She knows all her numbers and ABC’s.”

The Ontario Fire Marshal’s office is waiting for some heavy machinery to arrive before they can enter the home and search for the cause of the blaze, which started just before 1am in the end unit of the row of townhomes. It spread to four other units before firefighters were able to get it under control.

“The structure is not safe to go in,” notes Bill Hiscott, Ontario Fire Marshal’s Office. “…so we are going to have to take it from the top down and then work our way in. We’ll be looking at everything in the suite of origin…and going through it very carefully.”

An area resident apparently called 911 after seeing the flames.

It’s not yet known whether smoke detectors in the home were working.

“We believe it started right at the very end. We had a very heavy fire load in unit one – particularly on the second floor,” revealed acting fire chief Trent Gervais.

CityNews spoke exclusively to a neighbour who tried to help out.

“Tried to get in the back door,” Ryan said. “Took one step in and couldn’t breathe. Flames were all over the ceiling. Tried to get back in again, there was black smoke the second time I went in. Nothing I could do.”

More than three dozen people, including 23 children, have been affected by the fire. The Salvation Army is helping families find accommodation, clothing and other items.

“It’s heartbreaking. It really is,” observed neighbour Jennifer Hunt, who has started a Facebook page to collect donations. “I know she (Christine) was struggling. She was working lots of hours just to make money to buy stuff for her kids. She was very upset she didn’t have the money to buy her kids what they needed.”

If you’d like to help the families, donations are being accepted at the Walmart in Peterborough as well as at the Bank of Montreal.

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